

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the present amendments and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 17-26, 28, and 33-38 are pending. In the present amendment, Claims 17, 19, and 20 are amended; and new Claims 33-38 are added herewith. Support for the present amendments can be found in the original specification, for example at page 7, line 23 to page 8, line 2, at page 8, lines 9-12, in Fig. 4, and in Claims 17-20. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added by this amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 17, 18, 24, and 26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Bertaccini (U.S. Patent No. 4,147,455); Claim 19 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Bertaccini in view of Recalde (U.S. Patent No. 5,533,834); and Claims 20-23, 25, and 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Bertaccini.

Turning now to the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on Bertaccini and Recalde, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of these rejections and traverse these rejections, as discussed below.

The Office Action on page 5 in paragraph 7 states that “Claim 17...does not require the pipeline to move in a downward transverse direction relative to the support.”

Accordingly, Claim 17 is amended to recite, in part, “tilting upper surfaces of supports on which the pipelines rest with respect to a horizontal plane, and transversally with respect to a direction of the pipelines such that the pipelines undergo a downward transversal movement on the upper surfaces of the supports caused by a lateral force acting on the pipelines, in relation to a weight of the pipelines and an inclination angle of the upper surfaces.” It is respectfully submitted that the cited references do not disclose or suggest this feature recited in amended Claim 17.

In particular, Bertaccini discusses a support structure 1 for compensating irregularities of the sea bottom by supporting the pipeline at a preselected and fixed elevated position. The supporting structure 1 of Bertaccini completely limits the transversal movement of the pipeline by the combined action of the inclined surface 3 of the support and the wedge 10.

The Office Action further states on page 5 in paragraph 7 that “if the pipeline of Bertaccini were placed on the upper end of the supports (end adjacent pulley 15) after the supports were in position, the pipeline would experience a downward transversal movement of the upper surfaces of the supports until said pipeline came to rest against the upper surface of the wedge (10).”

However, there would be no apparent reason to place the pipeline 2 of Bertaccini at the upper end of the structure 1 adjacent pulley 15 as the Office Action suggests, because in this case the wedge 10 would be superfluous. The purpose of the wedge 10 is to prevent downward movement of the pipeline 2. See col. 3, line 50 of Bertaccini (“the wedge can only rise along the sloping sides 3 ***but it cannot slip backwards***”). The Office Action also ***does not suggest any reason*** why a person of ordinary skill in the art would place the pipeline of Bertaccini at the top of the support adjacent pulley 15.

Thus, in contrast from Bertaccini, the method according to Claim 17 creates a lateral force acting on the pipeline such that the pipelines undergo a (free) downward transversal movement on the surface of the support. In this way, control of the lateral buckling is achieved and the pipeline does not undergo additional stress.

The present invention as recited in the claims provides a method for triggering and controlling the lateral buckling, namely a method which allows lateral buckling of the pipeline to occur, but assures that it takes place in a predefined (thus controlled) manner in order to prevent additional stress on the pipeline. The system of Bertaccini is not capable of generating a force which predetermines the direction of a transversal downward movement of

the pipeline in case of buckling. In contrast, the support system of Bertaccini generates forces which prevent movement of the pipelines in case of buckling. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejection of Claim 17, and all claims which depend thereon, as anticipated by or unpatentable over Bertaccini, be withdrawn.

Claim 19 is dependent on Claim 17, and thus is patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to Claim 17. Further, it is respectfully submitted that Recalde does not cure the deficiencies of Bertaccini with respect to Claim 17. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that Claim 19 be allowed.

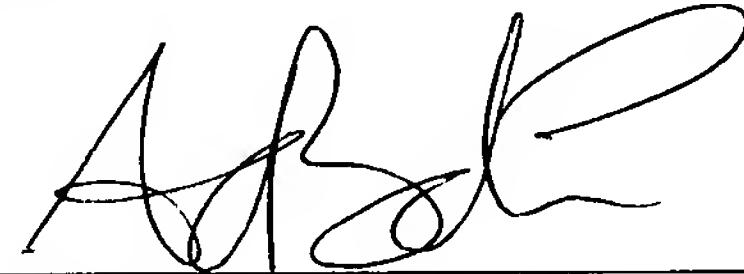
New Claims 33-38 are added by the present amendment. Support for new Claims 33-38 are found in the original specification, for example, at page 7, line 23 to page 8, line 2, in Fig. 4, and in Claims 17-20. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added. New dependent Claim 33 and new independent Claim 34 recite that **only** the lateral force acting on the pipelines affects the downward movement of the pipelines on the upper surfaces of the supports. In contrast, Bertaccini shows a wedge 10 placed on the surface 3 which affects (and prevents) the downward movement of the pipeline 2. Additionally, new Claims 35-38 depend on Claims 17 and 34 and thus are believed to be patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to Claims 17 and 34. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that new Claims 33-38 be allowed.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. A Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicant's undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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